



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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From Rhetoric to Action: Towards a Transformed Agriculture and a Food Secure Africa

The following are remarks, as prepared, by Tjada McKenna at a meeting during the African Union Summit in January 2014.

I'm honored to be here with you to represent the United States and join this major dialogue between African political authorities and civil society to promote successful agriculture in Africa.

Standing at this podium with leaders who have shown not only exceptional commitment but progress in advancing agriculture is an absolute honor.

First, I'd like to congratulate the African Union Heads of State and Government for naming 2014 as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security. It affirms your excitement and commitment to this critical sector's role in ending extreme poverty and undernutrition in Africa—excitement and commitment the U.S. Government shares with you.

As deputy coordinator of development for the U.S. Government's Feed the Future initiative, I have a true appreciation for what you have achieved. Feed the Future was, in fact, modeled after the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and its principles of country ownership and leadership. So thank you for the inspiration and leadership.

From the beginning, that continental vision by African leaders—born almost simultaneously with a complete rethinking of Africa's continental representation embodied in the new African Union—was not without its doubters.

But that vision and your actions have been critical in achieving progress in increasing investment, productivity and incomes and recognizing African agriculture as a solution to poverty and food insecurity.

And to your great credit, it was one in which Africa was half a decade ahead of development partners.

All along, the United States and our very strong civil society, private sector, and university partners were behind you and we even encouraged skeptics about the opportunity represented by CAADP and a new, continental vision.

We remain committed to supporting you and the AU's efforts to assess, in close cooperation with African civil society, how to strengthen commitments from that vision.

We're also very happy to see a new phase of CAADP build in mutual accountability mechanisms so that commitments, including those of development partners, are transparent and can be tracked and reviewed.

I want to emphasize that the United States Government's overarching priorities under Feed the Future are to reduce hunger, poverty and undernutrition.

Today, there are 842 million hungry people in the world. Hunger and the vicious cycle it generates are unacceptable, and we know we can do better.

As you know, President Obama announced his commitment to address global hunger, poverty and undernutrition and called on global leaders during the 2009 G-8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy, to reverse a decades-long decline in investment in agriculture.

Feed the Future was born of this commitment, and we have committed nearly four billion dollars to advance country-led priorities and support for smallholder farmers, with an emphasis on women, to promote growth in the agriculture sector.

The commitments made at L'Aquila also led to the creation of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, which itself has allocated almost a billion dollars to 25 countries, most of them—and most of the funding—in Africa. These funds are also

used to support CAADP investment plans.

Our strong support for African food security was further demonstrated by President Obama's announcement at the 2012 G8 Summit of the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition.

The New Alliance aims to achieve sustained and inclusive agricultural growth to lift 50 million people out of poverty by 2022 by driving effective country-led plans and policies for food security and leveraging the commitments of the private sector to increase investments where the conditions are right.

A shared commitment of African governments, local and international private sector partners, and donors, the New Alliance is also grounded in the CAADP principles.

Ten African countries have developed Country Cooperation Frameworks that align with each country's CAADP national investment plan and outline policy actions needed to attract private investment.

More than 140 companies—two-thirds of them African—have committed to responsibly invest more than \$3.7 billion in New Alliance countries.

Farmers, especially smallholders, are a critical component of the private sector, as entrepreneurs that invest and innovate to increase productivity and build market linkages that create functioning food systems.

At the same time, smallholder farmers in developing countries face some of the world's most difficult challenges. These farmers are eager for change—for new technologies, new knowledge and new opportunities that will help them solve their own agricultural problems.

Partnerships in agricultural development must begin with farmers on the ground, and farmers' organizations are thus key entities for ensuring that new technologies and products are relevant, locally-adapted and effective in meeting local needs, increasing agricultural productivity and improving nutrition.

Feed the Future proudly supports hundreds of farmers' organizations at the local and national level across Sub-Saharan Africa.

We have the tools and technologies to reduce hunger and poverty, but we need to partner with farmers to make the vision a reality. Equally important to taking new science and technologies to scale for increased agricultural productivity is ensuring that nutritionally-enhanced agricultural goods are consumed by African families. Improved nutrition is central to ending extreme poverty.

And it is at this kind of forum where the real will to do so—with the reassertion of our commitments and reflection on how we can collectively continue to act on the tremendous achievements to date—is so clear.

From the U.S. Government to the African Union and so many from civil society, we share a common vision to identify ways that smallholder farmers, women and men, and small businesses in agriculture can expand their opportunities.

Often those new opportunities come from private investment, from better science, from use of better seeds and appropriate fertilizer.

So we focus on improving value chains and leveraging investment, trade, and science in pursuit of a vision of a world with shared prosperity, less suffering.

And none of these things can we do effectively without working with African civil society – farmers groups, trade associations, millers' associations, NGO implementers, food security advocacy groups, and many others, who are a key part of what we do in our food security support in Africa.

Yes, civil society partners are often implementers of programs, but they are so much more than that too.

The achievements we have seen through Feed the Future – helping more than seven million food producers adopt improved agricultural practices and reaching more than 12 million children through nutrition interventions last year alone – have not been a result of our efforts alone.

Progress strongly depends on the inclusive leadership, the commitment of political leaders, and the quality of systems in developing countries.

A very strong and diverse civil society in the United States has pushed for greater support for agriculture and nutrition. NGOs

have been a very important part of this dialogue, but it's also involved farmer groups, private sector groups, and associations of universities, often in dialogue not only with the U.S. Government but with African governments represented by ambassadors in Washington.

These groups hold a lot of authority in Washington because they often times represent those we're trying to help. Their perspective is different from that of the government or private companies.

Civil society reviews, studies and disagreements with the U.S. Government are time consuming and sometimes frustrating, but that is part of working in a system of accountability.

It is part of my job to explain to civil society—and others—how it is that we can work with both investors and smallholders farmers, why we aren't doing more—or doing less—in certain countries, why we believe that sometimes others' evaluations of our efforts have erroneous determinations.

And I want to acknowledge, very openly here today, that it has been incredibly valuable being in partnership with U.S. civil society on the issues of supporting African agriculture. Civil society's unique perspectives strengthen our efforts, but yes, sometimes it's challenging.

It's not easy, it can even be frustrating. But we know there is no such thing as support without scrutiny. Or genuine dialogue without occasional disagreement.

But without robust engagement—engagement about important decisions—and sometimes respectful disagreement, government and civil society wouldn't be able to achieve what we have accomplished together to date. Nor would we be able to keep pursuing our shared vision.

And we have heard the desire for even greater engagement. This is why we are committed to developing an action plan for civil society engagement – because governments and civil society are often strongest when they work together. That plan will roll out a little later this year.

So I am so very, very happy to be part of this unprecedented major engagement between the AU and its member states, and African civil society, on agriculture and food security in Africa.

Congratulations on this continental dialogue in Africa between governments and civil society, and on the new, even stronger African commitment to a decade of inclusive development through agricultural growth.

[Learn more](#) about Feed the Future's work with civil society.